United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• Georgian and Abkhaz sides, meeting in Geneva, agree to cease-fire while talks continue on ending Abkhazia conflict; say extra international observers and use of peace-keepers would promote peace; POWs to be exchanged by 20 December and refugees to be allowed to return home.

• Marking World AIDS Day, Secretary-General calls for worldwide mobilization against AIDS; says United Nations will do more to combat epidemic; WHO reports that sex education leads to safer sexual practices among young people.

• Third Committee approves draft declaration on elimination of violence against women by which General Assembly would call on States not to invoke any custom to avoid obligation to combat such violence.

• Secretary-General tells World Bank conference that lack of political will is major cause of global hunger; international community, working with United Nations, should act to guarantee basic right of survival.

• Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development to begin third meeting at Headquarters tomorrow.

• United Nations to hold donors conference on re-establishment of Somali police beginning tomorrow in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

• Special Political and Decolonization Committee concludes peace-keeping review by approving draft resolutions on improving command and control of United Nations operations and protecting peace-keepers.

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Georgian and Abkhaz representatives meeting in Geneva today agreed not to use force or the threat of force against each other while negotiations to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia are continuing. The agreement, which was in accordance with the Sochi Agreement of 27 July on the cease-fire in Abkhazia, was contained in a Memorandum of Understanding concluded after two days of talks. The two sides also agreed

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that the maintenance of peace would be promoted by an increase in the number of international observers in the conflict zone and by the use of international peace-keeping forces, subject to agreement by the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

As a gesture of good will, the parties agreed to exchange all prisoners-of-war before 20 December without any preconditions. They further undertook to create conditions for the safe and speedy return of refugees in all regions of Abkhazia. It was also agreed that a group of experts including representatives of the parties, the United Nations, the Russian Federation and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) will begin work in early December to prepare recommendations on the political status of Abkhazia.

The Geneva meeting was held under the aegis of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Georgia, Edouard Brunner. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov attended as facilitator, and a CSCE observer was also present. The next round of United Nations-sponsored negotiations to settle the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict will begin on 11 January 1994 in Moscow or Geneva.

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In a statement on the occasion of World AIDS Day, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today called for worldwide mobilization against acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), describing it as a threat to everyone. He pointed out that over 14 million people have been infected by it and that that number could exceed 40 million by the end of the decade. The United Nations would do more to combat the epidemic, he stated.

A report by the World Health Organization Global Programme on AIDS, issued today to mark World AIDS Day, quotes evidence that sex education in schools leads to the adoption of safer sexual practices in young people. The report, based on 35 different studies, shows that sex education leads either to a delay in starting sexual activity or to a decrease in overall sexual activity, and that access to counselling and contraceptive services does not encourage earlier or increased sexual activity.

The most recent study, conducted among 1,800 boys in the United States aged between 15 and 19, found that the majority of them had received formal instruction on AIDS, birth control, and resisting pressure for sexual intercourse. This was associated with a decreased number of sexual partners, frequency of intercourse and increased condom use. The findings are considered significant because the WHO Global Programme on AIDS estimates that at least half of all HIV infections worldwide have occurred in people between the ages of 15 and 24. More than 1 billion people -- one fifth of the world's population -- are in this age range.

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The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) today approved a draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women by which the General Assembly would call on States to refrain from invoking any custom,

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tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligation to eliminate such violence.

The draft defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". It states that women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil and other fields and sets out a 17-point policy for States to pursue.

Under the terms of another draft adopted this morning, the Secretary-General would be urged to fully implement the plan of action to improve the status of women in the Secretariat by 1995. He would be urged to consider such measures as job-sharing, flexible working hours, child-care arrangements, career-break schemes and access to training, and would be requested to develop comprehensive policy measures aimed at preventing sexual harassment in the Secretariat.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told the World Bank conference on overcoming global hunger in Washington yesterday that the major cause of hunger was the lack of political will to deal with the problem, but that he was encouraged by signs that that was changing. The world now produced enough food to feed its population, but there was still the problem of access to food supplies, of distribution and of entitlement.

If hunger caused by crises required emergency relief, hunger caused by poverty should be the target of development efforts, the Secretary-General said. He noted that in this respect a great deal had been achieved. As a proportion of the world population, fewer people were hungry today than at any other time in history. Except in sub-Saharan Africa, nutritional trends had improved in all regions of the world.

However, the Secretary-General continued, 800 million people still suffered from insufficient or poor nutrition. Hunger was a violation of the most basic of human rights -- the right to survival -- and it was the responsibility of the international community to guarantee that right. The United Nations was central to that task because the solutions had to be comprehensive, integrating the social, economic and technological factors. Above all, Mr. Boutros-Ghali stated, food security had to be guided by a political consensus on the need for action.

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The Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development will begin its third meeting tomorrow at Headquarters under the chairmanship of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Among the topics to be discussed at

the two-day meeting will be conditions conducive to long-term development in Africa, the links between security and development in the continent, regional integration and cooperation, and diversification of African economies.

The Panel of High-level Personalities was appointed by the Secretary-General in December 1992 to advise him on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The Agenda, which was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1991, embodies mutually reinforcing responsibilities and commitments by Africa and the international community to foster the continent's economic recovery and development.

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A United Nations-sponsored conference for donor countries interested in providing resources for the re-establishment of the Somali police will begin tomorrow in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The three-day conference will provide donors with information on the status of the Somali police, ensure coordination on resources needed and provided, and ensure that a strategy for efficient use of contributions is in place.

International organizations, such as the European Community, and United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP), have expressed concern about and provided resources for the re-establishment of the Somali police. Assessments conducted by the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) and individual donor countries with the Somali police show that equipment for transportation, communications, police stations and individual officers -- including uniforms and weapons -- are needed in all regions of the country.

Conference participants will include representatives from Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Nigeria, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, the UNDP and the European Community.

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The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) yesterday concluded its comprehensive review of peace-keeping by approving recommendations for strengthening the command and control structure of United Nations peace-keeping operations and for protecting peace-keeping personnel. Acting without a vote, the Committee approved one draft resolution which would have the General Assembly urge the Secretary-General to initiate a review to assure the unity of command and control needed for successful peace-keeping and to improve the information flow and coordination between Headquarters and field missions.

A second draft resolution stressed the need to strengthen Secretariat command and control of peace-keeping operations based on clearly established lines of command. It would have the Assembly call on the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Security Council and troop-contributing countries, to strengthen arrangements for political direction and military command and

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control. It would call for improved coordination with humanitarian and civilian aspects of peace-keeping operations. The draft also covered such peace-keeping issues as resources and finances, organization and effectiveness, issues arising from "An Agenda for Peace" and the status and safety of United Nations peace-keeping personnel.

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